

Optimizing Crisis Solutions For Families Experiencing Homelessness

Tracks:

A Holistic Approach To Ending Family Homelessness

Track Sponsor:



Connecticut Office of
Early Childhood

Optimizing Our System To End Homelessness

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OPTIMIZING CRISIS SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

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AGENDA

- How Statewide policy stems from local CAN work
- Definitions and Frequently Used Terms
- Best Practices in Family Assessments
- Successes to date and Opportunities for the future

STATEWIDE POLICY



STATEWIDE BEST PRACTICES

Goal: To Ensure that there are no known unsheltered families with minor children in Connecticut

Policy: [Urgent appointments](#) – CAN Appointments are scheduled within 24 hours if a family self-identifies as:

- Already on street/car/abandoned building/place not meant for human habitation with nowhere to go
- They are willing to have someone check on unsheltered location if possible
- Reports being kicked out of doubled up situation without any other safe place to stay and reports they will be unsheltered tonight
- In extremely dangerous doubled up situation (i.e. engaging in risky behaviors to stay, feels unsafe in living environment due to abuse, violence)
- Dependent children are safe with friends or relatives, but parents are unsheltered (with a goal to reunite with children)

STATEWIDE BEST PRACTICES

Goal: To ensure that only families who are literally homeless or in extremely dangerous situations are entering into shelter.

Practice: Eliminating “shelter waitlists” and transitioning to [stabilization lists](#)

- Ongoing strengths-based, diversion efforts post CAN appointment
- Reduce the inflow to shelter by increasing diversion rates
- Does not guarantee emergency shelter
- Ongoing assessment of need to enter shelter



TERMS & DEFINITIONS



DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

- **Shelter Diversion-** Any intervention that is diverting a literally homeless or imminently homeless family from entering shelter
- **Homelessness Prevention-** Any intervention that is preventing homelessness or stabilizing precariously housed people not yet homeless
- The main difference between diversion and prevention is solely based on the time at which a client presents for services, not necessarily their housing status
 - A client can be literally homeless and diverted from shelter, but cannot receive prevention services (due to already being literally homeless)
- **Rapid Exit-** Any strategy that redirects literally homeless people in shelter back to a safe and stable living environment

HUD CATEGORIES OF HOMELESSNESS

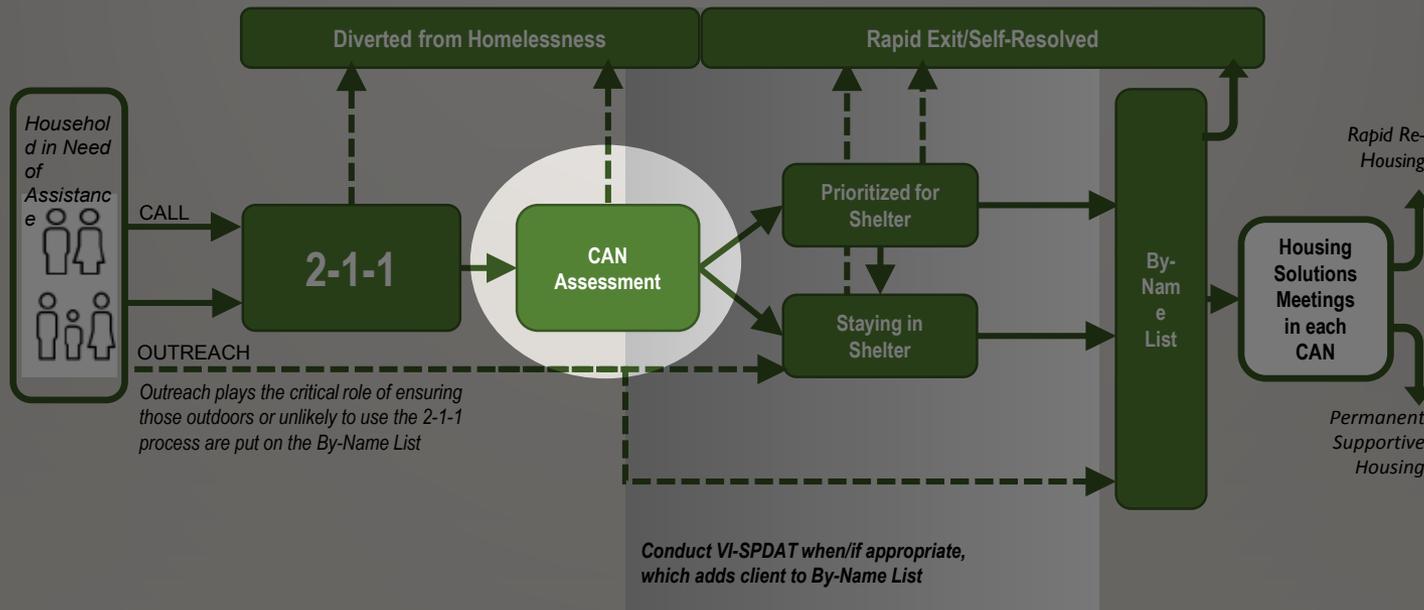
- **Literally Homeless (Category 1):** “Already Homeless”
- **Imminently Homeless (Category 2):** “Almost Homeless”
- **Persistent Instability (Category 3):** “Persistently Unstable”
 - *This is not a category that the State of CT recognizes as priority for services
- **Lack of Safety Homeless (Category 4):** “Actively Unsafe”
- ... with no other resources of support to protect them from the streets

CAN SYSTEM BEST PRACTICES



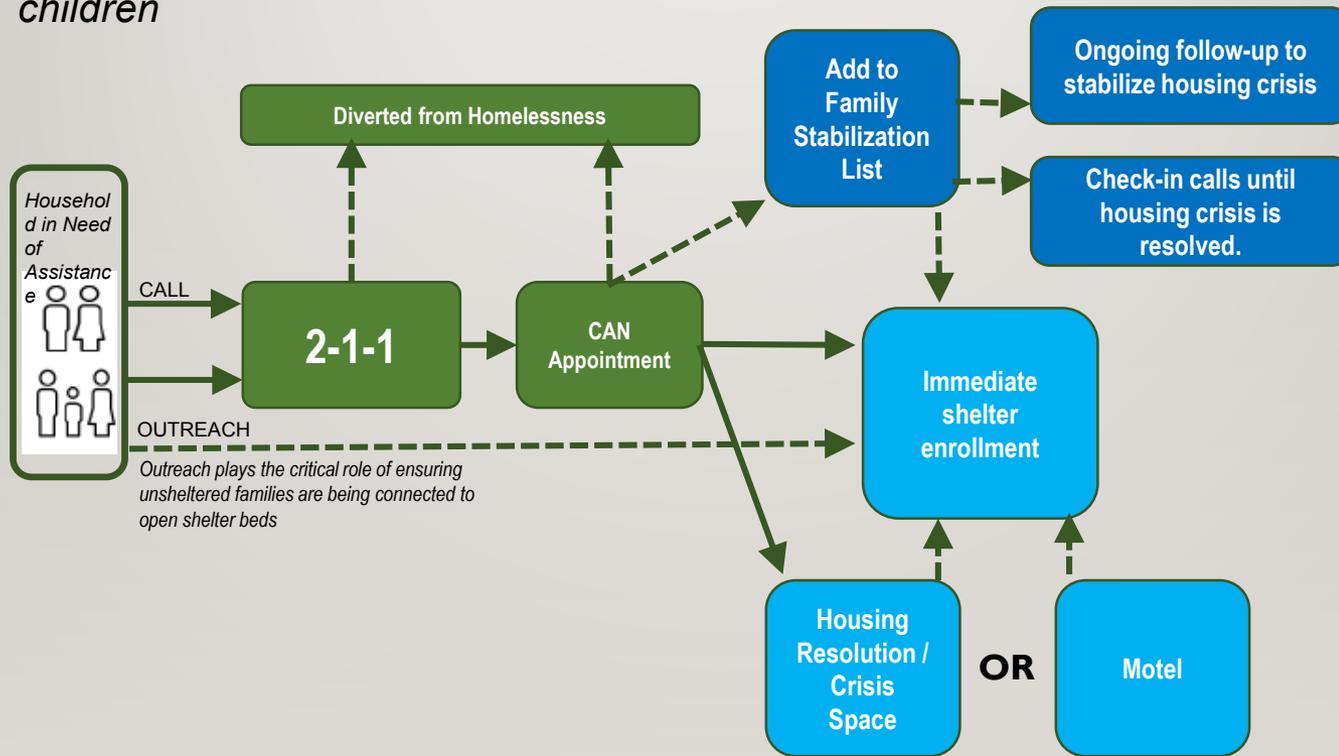
CAN System Overview

A high-level diagram of the coordinated access process from entry to exit



CAN Family Appointment Overview

A high-level diagram of CAN Appointment Outcomes for *families with minor children*



STAFFING & SYSTEM FLOW

- Daily appointments available for urgent family needs with specific staffing for families
 - All CAN's conduct urgent CAN Family appointments daily as need arises
 - Greater New Haven has 2 dedicated staff that conduct Family CAN appointments and facilitate diversion 3 days/week; MMW and Hartford have general specialist staff that do CAN assessments and facilitate diversion daily, not specific to population
 - Flexible appointment scheduling to accommodate need
 - CAN's try to allow for imminently homeless within 14-day window per Category 2 to attend CAN appointments proactively when scheduling allows

FAMILY CAN APPOINTMENT- MESSAGING

- Focused and deliberate messaging at the CAN appointment to set expectations
- Posted near sign-in sheet
- Laminated copies circulated to read while waiting for appointment
 - Lets clients know what to expect
 - Sets housing-focused tone
 - Defines shelter as last resort
 - Similar signage posted in shelters for continuity and continued emphasis on Housing-Focused principles

MMW WELCOME CARD

Welcome to your **Shelter Diversion Housing Assessment** with the Meriden-Middlesex County-Wallingford Coordinated Access Network (MMW CAN).



The purpose of today's assessment is to collaborate with you to identify immediate, alternative housing options **other than shelter**. **If necessary**, we will help connect you with services and financial assistance to help you to secure permanent housing.

The primary way that MMW CAN will help you today is by working with you to develop your Housing Plan. **Your Housing Plan will be your map to help you navigate a return to safe and stable housing!**



Remember: **YOU** hold the key to **YOUR** home. We believe **YOU** can turn the key **TODAY!**

CAN APPOINTMENT BEST PRACTICES



CONFIRMING HOMELESSNESS

- Historically, we have been using the VI/NST to measure vulnerability once someone is in our system without using any tools to measure homelessness at the front door
- By determining who is homeless at the front-end, we have a smaller pool to work with when determining who is the most vulnerable for our housing resources
 - If all community housing resources go through the CAN, we have to make sure we are prioritizing people who are actually homeless for those resources to ensure system optimization
- This ensures that clients who are brought into the system are actually homeless



CONFIRMING HOMELESSNESS

- People will say what they feel they need to say to get a CAN appointment
- It is very unlikely that a family is experiencing unsheltered homelessness
- Staff have to feel comfortable with assessing both safety and imminent/literal need and making a determination
- Verifying: who and what?
 - What do you know about x's housing? Is there anything you can offer to help? Is there anyone else you can think of that might be able to help?



CONFIRMING HOMELESSNESS

- Responsibility to keep communities intact, but flexible/responsive enough to allow for change
- Entering a shelter is entering a family into literal homelessness- we need to justify that
- Opportunity to model mediation, communication repair, creative problem-solving
 - Successfully diverting families may require the provision of financial assistance; but may not
- Short and long-term goals addressed; strengths-based, forward-thinking (Housing Plan)
- A client-centered approach assumes that families can figure it out with a little bit of support



HOUSING PLAN

- MMW Initial Housing Plan
 - Piloted from April to July 2018
 - Sets the tone for Housing First conversation
 - Establishes shelter as last resort
 - Weeds out those who are not truly in need of shelter
 - Document is used as a reference:
 - Outlines work client can do while on Stand-by List
 - Acts as a starting point for client and Shelter Case Managers/Housing Navigators



Meriden-Middlesex County- Wallingford Coordinated Access Network Initial Housing Plan		
Type of Plan: <input type="checkbox"/> Initial Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Update CAN Staff Name:		
Date of Plan: From _____ to _____ (up to 2 weeks)		
Housing Options I am willing to try (select 3 choices):		
<input type="checkbox"/> Roommates	<input type="checkbox"/> Rooming House / Sober House	
<input type="checkbox"/> Family / Friends	<input type="checkbox"/> "Traditional" Apartment by yourself	
<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly/ Monthly Motel	<input type="checkbox"/> "Secondary" Market (i.e. basement apartment) apartment by yourself	
<input type="checkbox"/> Room for Rent	<input type="checkbox"/> Residential Care Home	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursing Home	

Things I can do to work toward housing:		
Housing Option 1 (Choose from above list):	Expected cost to me:	Target Completion Date (mo/yr)
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		

Housing Option 2 (Choose from above list):	Expected cost to me:	Target Completion Date (mo/yr)
Task 1:		



Task 2:		
Task 3:		

Housing Option 3 (Choose from above list):	Expected cost to me:	Target Completion Date (mo/yr)
Task 1:		
Task 2:		
Task 3:		

My Monthly Income is (all sources):

SSI: \$ _____
 SSDI: \$ _____
 SAGA: \$ _____
 TANF: \$ _____

Employment: \$ _____
 Pension: \$ _____
 Alimony: _____
 SNAP/WIC

Child Support: \$ _____
 Other: \$ _____
 Health Insurance

If needed, I can work to increase my income by:	Target Completion Date (mo/yr)
Task 1:	
Task 2:	
Task 3:	



Outcome of Assessment (Check **one**)

Number of Adults: _____ Number of children: _____

1. Diverted _____ Where: _____
2. Enrolled into shelter _____ Name of shelter: _____ Address: _____
 - a. Are you able to sleep on a top bunk? Yes _____ No _____
3. Stand-by list _____ (List is for Meriden, Middletown, & Wallingford)
 - a. Are you able to sleep on a top bunk? Yes _____ No _____
 - b. If the MMW staff or the emergency shelters are unable to contact you after 2 attempts, you will be removed from the stand-by list.
4. Refused shelter services _____

Referrals or resources:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Staff Signature:		Date:	
Participant Signature:		Date:	

STABILIZATION AND DIVERSION



STABILIZATION LIST

- Family Stabilization: Process to manage the inflow of families who are within 14 days of losing their housing and imminently homeless into the homelessness response system
 - Category 2 families with no immediate post-CAN solution are entered on a Google doc following CAN Assessment
 - CAN Staff act as touchstone and support as families are encouraged to self-resolve
 - Diversion is the goal using strengths-based framework
 - Process does NOT imply that families will obtain shelter or a housing resource
 - If self-resolution is not achieved, an offer of shelter is used as the last resort

FLEXIBLE FUNDING

- Rental Prevention Program:
 - Hartford leverages its homeless prevention program to assist those seeking shelter diversion by offering rental/utility arrear payments to friends/family as a “rental payment” for the household to stay with them while they continue to self resolve their housing crisis.
- Flexible Funding:
 - Beyond eviction prevention, unrestricted funds can pay for transportation, food, medical bills, etc, acting as both a prevention and a diversion opportunity



TRIAGE

- If not divert-able, triage before shelter
 - Every family that is in need of shelter is informed that if they cannot self resolve their housing crisis, they can be accommodated in a safe space at a shelter, but beds are not available. If a households shows for this space, shelter diversion is continued to assist them in self resolving. If a family shows back for a second night, and beds are available, the family will be referred to a shelter for immediate intake.
 - If triage/shelter is full, any shelter family with a signed lease is moved to a motel to accommodate space. Hoteling is not used as an initial intervention.
- Off-line rooms/triage used before hoteling
 - Life Haven holds 2 rooms off-line for urgent families who would otherwise be hoteled
 - Beth-El Center uses a chapel as a triage space for a family size of 3 who would otherwise be hoteled



GOVERNOR'S CHALLENGE LESSONS LEARNED



SUCCESSSES

- Housed 338 Families between Sept 24, 2018 and Feb 28, 2019 through this effort
- Landlord engagement, building relationships (MMW)
- Targeting rapid exit funds, increased flexibility (GNH)
 - Previously, clients could access diversion funds OR enter shelter; now able to facilitate diversion and quick exit from shelter without jeopardizing access to funds
- Messaging for self-resolution for both clients and staff (GH)
 - Consistent messaging from Diversion appointment through shelter enrollment that households have the ability to self resolve their housing crisis.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Need more consistency among CANs
 - Specialty staff for families
 - Triage as leverage
- Flexible funds
 - Funds that aren't tied to rent/security deposit (and funds that are)
 - Adequate resources across communities

QUESTIONS AND CONTACTS:

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Questions?

Visit: <https://www.cceh.org/ati-2019/> or
contact training@cceh.org

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